

# Trust

**Story:** Trust

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**Author:** riespark

**Authorlink:** <https://www.fanfiction.net/u/6704917/>

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**Summary:** Felix had been about to walk out on deck before his eyes registered what he was seeing.

## **\*Chapter 1\*: Trust**

It was the middle of the night, and Felix was awake. No surprises there, really—his painfully accurate internal clock made sure he was always up in time for his shift on watch. He dragged himself out of bed and up the stairs, into the common area, and he was about to walk out the door and on to the deck before his brain registered what he was seeing.

Isaac had been on the previous watch, but apparently he wasn't alone. Jenna had joined him at some point, and the two of them were dancing together on the deck of the ship, Jenna in her knee-length nightdress and Isaac in loose pajama bottoms and a shirt. Felix walked closer to one of the open windows next to the door, curious in spite of himself. There was no music, and neither of them were humming, just moving on what was probably sheer muscle memory.

Felix recognized the dance, of course. It was of Volean origin, popular at festivals. All children in Vale were taught the dance as a tool of discipline, as the steps were difficult to memorize and differed by gender. When done correctly, it looked very impressive in large groups.

"You gonna step on my foot again?" Isaac's voice was pitched low and teasing, and Jenna snorted.

"I don't know, are you gonna turn the wrong way and slap me across the face again?"

"It was an *accident*," Isaac said, but she was laughing, and he smiled back at her. "I'm glad I'm not the only one who remembers this."

"How could we forget? The elders were so intent on preserving Valean culture, I could probably do this in my sleep."

"Close your eyes, then," he said, and the challenge in his voice was overridden by clear flirtation.

"At least now I can't get distracted by your face," Jenna said, and Isaac chuckled.

"You like my face."

"It does have its good days, I'll concede you that." Jenna lifted her hand to complete a twisting motion and it grazed Isaac's chest. "Sorry."

"No apology necessary," Isaac said, and his hand brushed against Jenna's waist in a way that was neither accidental nor part of the dance. Felix started to think that maybe he should just go back downstairs.

Slowly, the traditional dance morphed into something different, all their own. Jenna's arm slid around Isaac's neck, pressing their chests together. At the very edge of his hearing, Felix heard Jenna say, "You'd catch me if I fell, right?"

"I'd never let you fall in the first place," Isaac said. As if in demonstration, he stepped forward, wrapping one arm around Jenna's waist, and dipped her so low that her free hand brushed the deck. After a moment Felix realized that although Jenna's feet were still touching the ground, she wasn't putting any weight on them. Isaac was completely holding her up. Their faces were close, and the only audible sound was that of the waves rolling against the sides of the ship.

Isaac righted them, slowly, splaying his hand on the small of her back. Jenna, in turn, rested her free hand against Isaac's shoulder and raised herself up on her toes to kiss him.

And then Felix did turn away, finally, because somehow it felt more intimate than just a kiss. When he looked back up, their foreheads were pressed together, eyes still closed. Isaac's mouth moved, but the words were so quiet that Felix could no longer hear. But whatever he'd said made Jenna smile, and she kissed him lightly on the lips again.

After another long, quiet moment, Isaac said, "I just realized what time it is, Felix will probably be up here any minute." He took a step back, but his hand lingered on her arm.

Jenna said, "Want me to go get him?" and made a movement as though she was going to head for the door to the inside of the ship. Felix took that moment as his cue to walk as quickly and silently as he could back towards the stairs, doubling around when he was out of sight to head for the door again.

He'd timed it perfectly; Jenna opened the door when he was nearing the center of the common area, and he raised an eyebrow at her in feigned surprise. "I thought Isaac was on watch."

"She was keeping me company," Isaac said, as he slipped behind Jenna to pass through the door. The way his hand brushed across her shoulders didn't escape Felix's attention. "Good thing, too, when she showed up I was about ready to start talking to myself out of boredom."

"At least it's quiet out, then," Felix said, and Isaac nodded and tossed him a sloppy salute before bidding him goodnight.

Even as Isaac disappeared downstairs, Jenna lingered.

"He doesn't hate you, you know," she said.

Felix blinked in surprise. Out of all the things he'd been expecting to hear, that wasn't on the list. "I know he doesn't."

Jenna nodded, but didn't look entirely convinced. "It's just —"

"I trust him with my life. And in the event of my death, I would trust him to protect you before himself, which is all I can ask."

Jenna was clearly stunned by his admission, and it took her a moment to recover enough to ask, "But don't you think I can protect myself?"

"You can. I'm saying you'll be protecting him while he protects you," Felix responded. "That's what love is, isn't it?"

Jenna smiled, radiant, and threw her arms around him in a tight, but brief, hug. He watched her go downstairs before finally heading outside to the deck, marveling to himself that even in spite of all the pain and strife they'd endured, love still found a way.